

DR. CHARLES PAUL ALEXANDER

Charles Paul Alexander was born in Gloversville, New York, September 25, 1889, the son of Emil and Jane Parker Alexander. He entered Cornell University in 1909 to study entomology and received the Bachelor of Science degree in 1913, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1918. While a student, he served as assistant, and later as instructor, in general biology and natural history. He was curator of the Snow Entomological Collection of the University of Kansas from 1917 until 1919. At the Illinois State Natural History Survey, Urbana, he served as curator of the insect collections from 1919 until 1922. In 1922, he went to the then Massachusetts Agricultural College as assistant professor of entomology. He assumed charge of entomology in 1930 and was named chairman of the Department of Entomology and Zoology in 1938. He was Acting Dean of the School of Science from 1945 until 1946, when he was appointed Dean, a position he held until 1952. He retired from active teaching in 1959.

Charles P. Alexander is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of many leading entomological societies in the United States and abroad. He is an Honorary Member of the New York Entomological Society. In 1942 and 1943, he served as president of the Entomological Society of America.

In 1917, he married Mabel M. Miller of Brookview, New York. She has been his constant companion and helper, collecting insects, doing all the driving on field trips, and coauthoring papers.

Charles P. Alexander is probably best known as an authority on one of the largest groups of insects, the crane flies (Diptera: Tipulidae). His interest in the group started in 1906, when he visited Dr. E. P. Felt, the state entomologist of New York, for help in identifying some specimens of crane flies. The very conspicuous species were easily identified, but there was no one available to identify the rest. Encouraged by Drs. James G. Needham and Charles W. Johnson, who assured him that the family was ripe for study, Alexander has been studying the crane flies to this day. He has collected crane flies regularly and widely. The lure of opportunities for crane fly collecting has always been strong, and many field trips were taken, some as far as Alaska. A typical western trip covered more than 10,000 miles, lasted 80 days, and resulted in the collection of about 5,000 crane flies and more than 25,000 other insects for the University of Massachusetts collections. He has assembled what is probably the most complete collection of any major group of insects. It includes almost 13,000 species of crane flies, many represented by type material, acquired from museums, collectors, expeditions, and his own field trips. Of particular importance is a reference collection of more than 50,000 microscope slides showing the various struc-



Dr. Charles Paul Alexander, 1950.

tures needed in taxonomic study of the group. Alexander has described over 10,000 species of tipulids and published more than 1,000 papers on them.

After his retirement from active teaching, he transferred his crane fly collection to his home in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he had a special annex built to contain the collection. In "Crane-fly Haven," as this annex is known, Alexander has continued his entomological research free from academic responsibilities. With his comprehensive knowledge and incomparable collection of tipulids, he has accomplished a tremendous amount of taxonomic work in a relatively short time. But as he realizes perhaps more than anyone else, knowledge of crane flies is still incomplete. Despite his work in taxonomy, the majority of species are represented only by adults,



Dr. Alexander in "Crane-fly Haven," Amherst, Massachusetts. Top left: With reprints of his publications. Top right: At work. Bottom left and right: Charles and Mabel Alexander, 1979.

and little is known about the ecology, behavior, and biology of all stages of most of the species. However, few other groups have such a strong taxonomic foundation upon which to build.

In recognition of this great entomologist's intensive efforts and impressive accomplishments over the past 68 years, this issue of the *Journal of the New York Entomological Society* is dedicated to Dr. Charles Paul Alexander on his 90th birthday.

Dr. Henry M. Knizeski, Jr., Department of Natural Sciences, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522.